

## Supplemental Recommendations

- 1) Case-flow management plan: same judge for all hearings until permanency is achieved, computerized hearing notices and court orders, specific dates and times for each scheduled hearing, consistent policy on continuances and, management information system (manual or automated case-tracking)
- 2) Facilities: designated hearing rooms; separate waiting room for children and witnesses
- 3) Presence of attorneys at the protective custody hearing: juvenile office attorney; guardian ad litem; and attorney for parents.
- 4) Transportation for parents to: court hearings; visitation; and, all court ordered services.

## Project Evaluation

A process and outcome evaluation is being conducted by the Institute of Applied Research (IAR), an independent, not-for-profit research and consulting organization. The final report will include, but necessarily be limited to, an analysis of data which:

- ◆ Demonstrates the impact in the 22nd Judicial Circuit of implementing the core and supplemental requirements of the Project.
- ◆ Determines whether these changes necessitated by the core requirements and supplemental requirements resulted in achieving permanency for a greater number of children in a shorter period of time.
- ◆ Makes recommendations to consider in implementing the requirements of the Project statewide.

## For information on the Court Improvement Project, please contact:

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If you need assistance or an  
accommodation in order to participate  
in these court services, please contact:

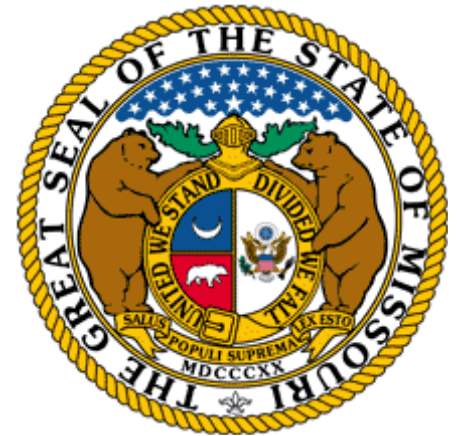
THE AMERICANS with  
DISABILITY COORDINATOR,  
JANICE KOCH

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## Juvenile Court

## Improvement Project



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Dedicated to Child Protection

## What is the Juvenile Court Improvement Project?

Missouri's Juvenile Court Improvement Project is designed to increase the effectiveness of Missouri courts in implementing the reforms mandated by Congress in the Adoptions Assistance and Child Welfare Act and Adoption and Safe Families Act.

### What is the purpose of the Project?

The goal of the Court Improvement Project is timely, full and fair hearings for all children and their families and, ultimately, timely and permanent placements for every abused and neglected child.

The City of St. Louis Family Court - Juvenile Division became a participant in the Project on February 1, 2000, when the core requirements of the Project were implemented in the courtroom of the Honorable Thomas J. Frawley. Effective January 2, 2003, these core requirements have been extended to the remaining three courtrooms in the Juvenile Division.

### Areas of Improvement

Five areas were identified as needing change for the City of St. Louis Family Court to achieve timely permanency for the abused and neglected children who appeared before it.

- ◆ Time frames for hearings.
- ◆ Content of hearings.
- ◆ Appointment of guardians ad litem for children and, when appropriate, appointment of legal counsel for indigent parents.
- ◆ Case flow management.
- ◆ Training for all key personnel.

## Core Requirements for Court Reform

### Time Frames for Hearings

#### Protective Custody —

- 1) Within 3 working days of removal.
- 2) Petition must be filed at or before protective custody hearing.
- 3) Guardian ad litem must be appointed and named in temporary custody order.

#### Adjudication Hearing — C

- 1) Within 30 to 60 days after the date of removal.

#### Disposition Hearing —

- 1) Within 90 days after the date of removal.

#### Review Hearing —

- 1) At least every 90 days after disposition and prior to the permanency planning hearing.
- 2) May be held more often as necessary or desirable.

#### Permanency Planning Hearing

- 1) Within 12 months after the date of removal.
- 2) Judge/Commissioner must choose a permanent plan for the child, if: The child is to be returned home on a specific date; The child will be legally freed for adoption (termination of parental rights); Guardianship of the child will be awarded to an individual or couple through probate court; The child will remain in out of home placement in a planned permanent living arrangement; The child will remain in out of home placement with a goal of family reunification, but only for a specific and limited period of time. (A date for reunification must be set and that date should be prior to the date of the next scheduled review hearing.)

**Post Permanency Planning Hearing** — Currently once a year.

- 1) Held at least once every 90 days in cases where a permanent plan was either reunification or termination of parental rights/adoption.
- 2) At least once every 6 months in all other cases.
- 3) May be more frequent, as necessary.

### Content of Hearings

- 1) Increase the thoroughness of hearings by requiring that certain relevant issues be addressed at each stage of the hearing process.
- 2) Emphasize to the parents at every opportunity that time is short because the court must decide on a permanent plan for their child within one year from the date the child was removed from their custody.
- 3) At the end of each hearing, serve all parties with notice of the next hearing date and any court orders from the hearing.
- 4) Conduct a thorough case review, including what services are necessary for the family, whether those services have been provided, whether the parents are complying with treatment plan, whether the child's placement is appropriate and whether reasonable efforts have been made to prevent removal from the home, to reunify the family and to place the child in a permanent home.

### Other Core Requirements

- 1) Participation in joint training required of all key personnel.
- 2) DFS office must be a Family-Centered Out-of-Home Care Site.
- 3) DFS office must provide list of local available resources to court and attorneys.
- 4) All pilot project personnel must participate in project evaluation.